

A Guide to Achieve Self-Determination through Employment and Long-Term Supports



***Helping Individuals Achieve Goals
One-Step at a Time***

**Developmental Disabilities Program of Clark County Community Services
*Published 2004***

Why Pursue Employment?

Employment allows individuals to gain independence, full integration, and achieve a self-determined life! As work continues to enhance the quality of life for individuals, there is an increasing expectation by state and county agencies that all adults work. This movement is working to remove employment barriers that people with developmental disabilities face, and give them opportunities unprecedented in the past.

Prepare For the Future

One of the biggest challenges individuals face is the transition from public education entitlement, to eligibility based services. To receive supports after the age of 21 individuals must go through lengthy application procedures, which if not prepared for, can leave those with disabilities unsupported after high school. To ensure that individual skills continue to progress after school, families are encouraged to plan and prearrange adult services prior to exiting the school system. To assist in this process, this guide identifies the necessary steps one needs to take to guarantee system support, and achieve long-term goals.

It is important to remember that though most transition planning starts in high school, preparation for adult life begins at any age! Successful transition requires that preparation activities begin as early as elementary school, with students gaining skills such as independence and responsibility. In middle school, those with disabilities should explore personal interests and abilities. Starting the process early prepares students with disabilities to think about what goals they want to achieve in adult life, which contributes to optimum post school outcomes.

Steps to Self-Determination

STEP 1: GET A DDD CASE MANAGER! The Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD) of Washington State's Department of Social and Health Services is a gateway to help those with developmental disabilities receive DDD services, including vocational supports. Eligibility determination for DDD services and Case Management is based on information the Department receives detailing the individual's level, and kind of disability. DDD should be contacted at the time an individual has been notified, or suspected to have a developmental disability. DDD's local office for Clark County: (360) 696-6350

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STEP 2: ENSURE YOUR SUPPORTS! Gaining employment often requires the interaction, and approval of both long and short-term services, which can be a lengthy process. To best guarantee that supports are in place when you need them, individuals need to communicate with those that authorize services as soon as possible.

Short-term supports: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) of Washington State's Department of Social and Health Services, objective is to assist individuals in obtaining competitive employment on a short-terms basis. They may provide career counseling, vocational assessments, and authorize employment support services. Individuals are encouraged to meet with their school's DVR representative for an informal assessment by the age of 18, and can apply for services the summer before their last year of public education. Vancouver DVR: (360) 691-7060.

Long-terms supports: The Developmental Disabilities Program (DDP) of the Clark County Department of Community Services plans long-term support services for individuals 21 years and older who are referred through DDD. DDP contracts with providers whose services demonstrate flexible supports, meaningful work, community inclusion, full participation, and choice in decision making. Clark County Community Services: (360) 397-2130. After one is referred to DDP they will then decide what provider, or providers' best fits their needs based on personal interests, abilities, and desired career objectives.

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DDP Providers:

Planning Services- Planners assist people with developmental disabilities to identify, plan, and negotiate their needed employment supports. These providers educate individuals to self-direct their services, and practice person-centered career planning.

Benefits Analysis- An analysis and planning service that helps individuals with developmental disabilities and their families understand and use Social Security benefits to further their employment goals. The goal of benefits analysis is to inform, educate and assist individuals to make informed decisions about how to manage resources to achieve and enhance long-term support.

Employment Provider: Employment providers offer job development, one-on-one training, and follow-along services for those who need ongoing support to perform their work. Providers promote work in integrated settings, competitive wages, training strategies for independent employment, and values to increase self-sufficiency. There are two primary approaches to employment that providers offer that depends on the support needs of the individual.

- **Individual Supported Employment:** Individual Employment providers establish employment opportunities for individuals with severe disabilities in local business or industry on a one-person, one job basis for jobs at, or above minimum wage. Providers develop jobs based on individual interests, assist with training, and offers ongoing support to their clients.
- **Group Supported Employment:** Group Supported Employment is an approach in which a group of eight or fewer individuals perform work tasks within a host company in the community, or as part of a crew that travels site to site. The employment provider supports individuals, works with the host company, and ensures a trained supervisor is always at the work site. This approach maintains many benefits of integrated employment, while providing the continuous support required by some individuals for long-term job success.

Steps to Self-Determination

Step 4: AUTHORIZE SUPPORTS! Once a preferable DDP provider or providers has been identified, one must contact their DDD case manager to authorize services.

Step 5: PLAN SERVICES WITH YOUR PROVIDER! Based on goals identified by the participant, DDD, DVR, and the County, a plan will be developed by your provider that outlines the steps to achieve objectives. Plans should include the cost of services, and state which supports are needed short or long term.

Step 6: COMMUNICATE WITH SYSTEM PARTNERS! Remember in eligibility based systems, the individual in need is in charge of seeking services, and shares the responsibility of assuring that supports are obtained, and carried out successfully. This requires remaining in contact with system partners, such as the County, DVR, and DDD, throughout the entire duration one receives services to guarantee ongoing support. This includes verifying that funds for short and long-term services have been approved, discussing progress with providers, and informing services of any billing changes.

Tasks to Accomplish by Age: A Checklist

By Age 14

- € One should start exploring post-school opportunities and employment options from the beginning of High School transition planning. Connections with adult service agencies that provide supports for persons with developmental disabilities after graduation or at the age of 21 should be made.
- € Begin an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) that includes post-school planning. Those present at IEP meetings include parents, the student, a general and special education teacher, and if eligible for DDD services, a Case Manager.

By Age 17

- € Consider Guardianship. A guardianship is the “legal power to care for another person and manage his or her affairs.” When people with developmental disabilities reach the age of 18, they receive all the legal rights and responsibilities of any adult. If parents feel their daughter or son could make decisions that would harm or hinder their progression, they may want to consider guardianship before the age of 18.

By Age 18

- € Due to adult service waitlists, those with disabilities can be left unsupported after the age of 21. However, families can assure their child will have funds necessary to receive services that sustain and build skills by incorporating Social Security Work Incentives into transition plans.
- € Families should investigate SSI work incentives such as Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS). This resource allows individuals to set aside income and/or resources to achieve employment goals.

By Age 21

- € Entitlement through Public Education ends.
- € For young adults with developmental disabilities, notify DDD of readiness to start adult services

Necessary Supports and Services to Consider

Social Security Income: This benefit is available to those at any age who have a disability that impairs their ability to work, and who also meet the financial eligibility requirement. The benefit provides payments to help meet daily living expenses. Log onto www.ssa.gov or call the Social Security Administration at 1-800-772-1213 for more information.

Training: Clark County is a host to many educational classes, support, and advocacy groups. Log on to www.co.clark.wa.us/commserve or call (360) 397-2130 for a list of support resources.

Family Support Services: This state service provides a variety of supports that assist families who care for their family member in their home, which includes respite care and therapies. Services are flexible and depend upon the needs of the individual and family. Eligibility is determined by DDD case managers.

Alternative Work Services: Though some individuals cannot work due to fragile medical conditions they may be eligible to participate in alternative skill building services. Community Connections provides opportunities for individuals to develop relationships with community members, increase personal independence, contribute to society, and participate in non-segregated activities. For more information call Developmental Disabilities Program of Clark County at (360) 397-2130

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